

AN
EPISTLE
TO
FRIENDS

Coming forth in the Beginning of a

TESTIMONY:

And of the

Snares of the Enemy therein.

Dearly beloved Friends,

WH O in your Meetings and Assemblies sometimes feel the Beginning of a Testimony for the Lord, spring and move in your Hearts; keep your Watch in the Light, that so none

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stay

stay behind, neither run before, but let all
 who open their Mouths in the Assemblies
 of the Lord's People, do it as the Oracles
 of God, in the Arising of the eternal pure
 Power ; for nothing can beget to God,
 but what comes from the immortal Word
 of Life, that lives and abides for ever ;
 and nothing can refresh, strengthen or
 comfort that which is begotten by the
 immortal Word of Life, but what springs
 from the same. And therefore, *dear*
Friends, whom this concerns, wait dili-
 gently, not only to know and savour every
 Motion, but also to know the appointed
 Time and Season when the same Motion
 should be brought forth ; so shall what is
 ministred, if it be but few Words, reach
 to the Witness, and do its Service. For
 this I have learned, That though there
 may be a true Motion of the Power of the
 Lord, and a true Operation thereof, yet
 where there is not a true waiting for the
 perfecting

perfecting of what is to be brought forth, but instead thereof, it coming forth before the Time, that which is brought forth seems an untimely Birth ; which is hurt as to the Vessel through which it comes, and the Hearers thereof are burthened, and the Life which first moved comes to be oppressed ; and here is the Ground of that untimely Birth that never saw the Sun, that hath, doth, or shall come forth : And as long as any are found walking in this By-path, although they may find the true Power of God moving in them, yet they never come to be skilful, nor to divide the Word of God aright ; and such do not truly grow, but sometimes bring forth a Mixture, sowing the Field with two Sorts of Grain, and wearing a Linen and Woollen Garment.

So, *Friends*, this lieth upon my Spirit to all who feel the Beginning of a Testi-

mony spring in your Hearts ; Wait diligently in that Light, low, in the pure Stilness and Passiveness of your Spirits ; and as you here wait, you will come to feel the Counsel of the Lord sealed unto your Understandings, and see the Time when to speak, and when to be silent ; and here will be a right and true Increase of your Testimonies : And when that which is thus sealed to the Understanding is offered, retire inward, and sink down into the pure Stilness, and keep in the Valley ; and let all know, that no Ministration, save that which comes from Life itself, from the fresh Arisings of the pure Power of the Lord, availeth any Thing ; and all Ministrings out of this will come to an End, and fade, and vanish in the approaching Day of Trial.

And, *dear Friends*, as the Mind and Will of the Lord is made manifest, yield
 sincere

sincere Obedience thereunto, if the Requirings be but a few Words; for I have seen it a dangerous Thing to resist and rebel against the Motions of God's Power, and have known many Hours of Sorrow for so rebelling. And in the Day of a beginning of a Testimony for the Lord, even in the upright Heart, great will be the Opposition of the Enemy every Way, where he cannot lead out before, for to bring forth an untimely Birth; there he will endeavour to shut up the Heart in Disobedience, or Rebellion, or raise up so many Fears, Doubts and Amazements, if possible to bewilder the Soul: And here I had perished, if it had not been for the dear Love and tender Mercy of the Lord. And so, *dear Friends*, for whose Sake I am moved thus to write, when a Motion is felt, and Openings are in the Heart, and the Power of the Lord is prevailing, then sink down in that in which no vain
Thought

Thought can be hid, and stand single and passive ; and the more still, humble and passive thou art, who art thus exercised, the Motion of Life will the more live and shew itself, and the Power will arise and clear thy Understanding ; and then, in the Power which warmeth thy Heart, and moveth on thy Spirit, enter into thy Service ; and when that's done, add not, but sit in the still Habitation, and in that Humility and Passiveness thou wast in before, and then the Reward of Obedience thou wilt feel, and grow in Experience and Knowledge, and be more and more furnished to every good Word and Work.

And in this even Path, in which all will feel a being strengthened with Might in the inward Man, and furnished to serve the Lord, God Almighty preserve all that are thus exercised.

And

And, *Friends*, when any through want of Experience err, in running before the Power, be very tender ; and altho' there may be a Saviour and Judgment in yourselves, and you may be burthened, yet beware how you speak to ease yourselves, but wait on the Lord therein, to be guided by his Counsel ; for some having such a Sense, as aforesaid, and not having a Discerning wherein the Miscarriage lay, have run forth in Judgment, and so have sometimes hurt, and even destroyed, or at least have become a Stumbling-block to such an exercised Friend, and have also much hurt themselves ; so that they not having a true Discerning, between the first moving Cause, which is the Power, and that which led forth before the Power, have judged both, and so have brought a Hurt over their own Souls, through judging the Power of the Lord ; and this sometimes may extend to hurt others : Out of which Snare
 God

God Almighty preserve all, that so one may be a Strength to another, taking one another by the Hand, saying one to another, *Let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the House of the God of Jacob,* who will teach us more and more of his Ways ; and here, in all God's holy Mountain, is neither hurting nor destroying.

*Given forth in the Moving of God's
eternal Spirit, through your dear
Brother,*

CHARLES MARSHALL.